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TO RUEHPG/AMEMBASSY PRAGUE IMMEDIATE 8522  
INFO RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 2460

UNCLAS STATE 074681

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E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [OPDC](#) [PHUM](#) [EZ](#)  
SUBJECT: INVITATION TO PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE  
EVENT TO VACLAV HAVEL

REF: OTALLAH-DODMAN JULY 1 E-MAIL EXCHANGE

1.(U) This is an immediate action request. Post is requested to transmit the letter of invitation in paragraph 3 below to former President Vaclav Havel. No signed original will follow.

2. (U) BACKGROUND: The United States and 63 other co-sponsor countries, including all 27 European Union members, circulated a Declaration on Prisoners of Conscience as a UN document on June 17. The text of the Declaration can be found at <http://www.un.org/ga>. The point of the Declaration, which does not mention specific states, was to address thematically the issue of political prisoners in countries such as Cuba, Burma, and Belarus. We are now organizing a follow-up public affairs event at the UN on July 24 from 1:00-2:30 p.m., which we hope will include a high-profile keynote speaker such as Vaclav Havel and a panel of former prisoners or family members of current prisoners from such countries as Cuba, Burma, Belarus, Eritrea, Uzbekistan, and Syria.

3. (U) Begin text:

Dear President Havel:

The United States is working with other United Nations delegations to organize a public event at the United Nations headquarters in New York on July 24 (1:00 to 2:30 p.m.) to build awareness of the plight of prisoners of conscience in countries around the world. It would be deeply gratifying to human rights advocates and defenders -- as well as to current prisoners of conscience and their families -- if you would participate as the keynote speaker either in person or via digital video conference.

Your unwavering commitment to human rights and fundamental freedoms in your country and internationally has been an inspiration to people around the world who have stood up for the right to freedom of expression, belief, and assembly and have been imprisoned for doing so. Your life story is a testament to the courage and conscience with which you have led peaceful change.

Sixty-four countries recently joined together in making a Declaration at the United Nations on Prisoners of Conscience. The Declaration calls on all nations to work for the freedom of prisoners of conscience throughout the world in accordance with the principles set forth sixty years ago in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. It commits co-sponsor nations to work for the freedom of all those who have been imprisoned for peacefully exercising their fundamental rights to gather in public and to speak and publish opinions, including opinions that are critical of governments.

Thank you very much for your kind consideration of this invitation.

Sincerely,

Condoleezza Rice

End text.  
RICE